



**CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
6:30 PM, Wednesday, March 4, 2026
IONIA CITY HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor John Milewski called the meeting of the Ionia City Council to order at 6:40 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor John Milewski led everyone present with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Roll call revealed a Quorum with Councilmembers Margot Cook, Tom Millard, Richard Starr, Jeff Winters, Mary Patrick, Troy Waterman, Brenda Cowling, and Mayor John Milewski present. Councilmember Tim Lee was absent.

Councilmember Patrick made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Winters, to excuse the absence of Councilmember Tim Lee.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

With no changes or additions, Councilmember Winters made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Cowling, to approve the agenda as presented.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(II.1.) February 4, 2026 – Regular Meeting

Minutes from the regular meeting of February 4, were reviewed. Councilmember Millard made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Waterman, to approve the February 4, 2026, meeting minutes as presented.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

III. PROCLAMATIONS

(III.1.) Proclamation for March is Reading Month 2026

Mayor John Milewski read and presented a Proclamation to declare March 2026 as Reading Month.

Proclamation for March is Reading Month 2026

WHEREAS, literacy is the cornerstone of all learning, serving as the essential foundation upon which our citizens build successful lives, vibrant careers, and informed perspectives; and

WHEREAS, early learning and consistent exposure to books during childhood are the most effective predictors of future academic success, fostering cognitive development, increasing a growing child's vocabulary with a lifelong curiosity about the world; and

WHEREAS, reading transcends the mere acquisition of facts, offering a gateway to empathy, cultural understanding, and the ability to imagine a brighter, more innovative future; and

WHEREAS, our libraries, schools, and families serve as the vital guardians of this tradition, working tirelessly to ensure that every individual—regardless of age or background—has access to the transformative power of the written word; and

WHEREAS, by committing to literacy today, we ensure a more articulate, compassionate, and empowered tomorrow; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that I, John R. Milewski II, Mayor of the City of Ionia, do hereby declare March 2026 as Reading Month in the community of Ionia, Michigan; and

BE IT FURTHER PROCLAIMED that I encourage all citizens to:

- **Dedicate** time each day to reading with a child, a peer, or in quiet reflection.
- **Support local libraries** and independent bookstores that keep our stories alive.
- **Celebrate the diversity of voices** in literature that challenge us and help us grow.

As we celebrate the joy of discovery this month, we reflect on the timeless wisdom of Theodor Seuss Geisel:

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

James and Kim Roberts (760 Skyview Trail) - Indicated that they have had multiple sewer back-ups due to a long lateral line that is interconnected with two other homes before connecting to the City's sewer system. They requested assistance from the City to resolve this issue.

Miguel Pilar (Lake Odessa) - Announced that he was running for State Representative for the 78th District and shared his platforms.

Kaleb Hudson (City of Hastings) - Announced that he was running for State Representative for the 78th District and shared his platforms.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND ASSOCIATED ACTION

(V.1.) Public Hearing to receive comments on Ordinance No. 602 - Codification

Mayor Milewski opened the public hearing for comments on Ordinance No. 602 at 6:55 PM and subsequently closed the public hearing at 6:56 PM following no comments from the public.

Councilmember Starr made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Cowling, to conduct a second

reading and adopt Ordinance No. 602, an ordinance to codify the ordinances adopted by the City Council since March 5, 2025.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Margot Cook, Tom Millard, Richard Starr, Jeff Winters, Mary Patrick, Troy Waterman, Brenda Cowling, John Milewski

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

MOTION CARRIED

**CITY OF IONIA
IONIA COUNTY, MICHIGAN
Ordinance No. 602**

**AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE EDITING AND INCLUSION OF CERTAIN
ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS AS PARTS OF THE VARIOUS COMPONENT
CODES OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES AND REPEALING ORDINANCES
AND RESOLUTIONS IN CONFLICT THEREWITH**

At a regular meeting of the City Council for the City of Ionia, Michigan held at City Hall on March 4, 2026, beginning at 6:40 P.M., City Councilmember Starr made a motion to adopt this Ordinance, which by motion was supported by Councilmember Cowling.

WHEREAS, American Legal Publishing Corporation will soon complete its most recent updating and revision of the Codified Ordinances of the City;

WHEREAS, various ordinances and resolutions of a general and permanent nature that have been passed by Council since the date of the last updating and revision of the Codified Ordinances (March 5, 2025) have been included in the Codified Ordinances of the City;

The CITY OF IONIA (the “City”) HEREBY ORDAINS:

Section 1. That the editing, arrangement and numbering or renumbering of the following ordinances and resolutions are hereby approved as parts of the various component codes of the Codified Ordinances of the City, so as to conform to the classification and numbering system of the Codified Ordinances:

<u>Ord. or Res. No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>C.O. Section</u>
593	4-2-25	Amend Ch. 1246: Zoning Map to reflect rezoning of 848 and 850 E. Lincoln Avenue from B-1 to HDR
Res. 25-16	6-24-25	Amend water and sewer fees in accordance with Sec. 214.05 and Sec. 1040.10
594	7-2-25	Amend Ch. 1276: Site Plan Review, Sec. 1289.08, and Sec. 1290.09
595	8-6-25	Amend Sec. 606.01, Ch. 804: Sidewalk Cafes, Sec. 1020.17, and Sec. 1062.13 – Alcoholic Beverages
Res. 25-23	9-3-25	Revise and change City Ward boundaries in accordance with Sec. 6.03 of City of Ionia Charter
596	10-1-25	Amend Ch. 1612: Emergency and Fire Services Response Cost Recovery

597	10-1-25	Amend Ch. 1246: Zoning Map to assign the T Zoning District to parcel 34-204-800-000-005-13
Res. 25-24	10-1-25	Establish a schedule of rates, fees, and charges in accordance with Sec. 1612.02 and Sec. 1612.03
598	11-5-25	Enact new Ch. 1294: Short-Term Rentals and amend Sec. 1240.11, Sec. 1248.02, Sec. 1250.02, Sec. 1252.02, Sec. 1258.02, and Sec. 1260.02
599	11-5-25	Amend Ch. 858: Renting of Residential Property
600	11-5-25	Amend Sec. 214.06 – Establish ADU Fees
Res. 25-25	11-5-25	Establish rental registration program fees in accordance with Sec. 858.08
601	1-7-26	Enact new Sec. 1274.10 and amend Sec. 1260.03 – Parking as an Accessory Use to an Adjacent Lot

Section 2. If any section, clause or phrase of this ordinance is declared to be invalid, the same shall not affect the validity of the ordinance as a whole or any part thereof other than the part so declared to be invalid.

Section 3. This ordinance shall be published and recorded as provided in the City Charter and shall take effect upon publication.

ORDINANCE NO. 602 DECLARED ADOPTED.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

(VI.1.) City of Ionia DDA 2025 Annual Report

Downtown Development Authority Director Cassie Rice presented the DDA 2025 Annual Report.

Councilmember Winters made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Starr, to accept the 2025 Annual Downtown Development Authority Report.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

(VI.2.) Vertical Pole Banner Application - Ionia Community Awareness

Councilmember Millard made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Cowling, to approve the vertical pole banner application submitted by Ionia Community Awareness to display up to 96 banners as specified, from September 1 – September 30, 2026.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Margot Cook, Tom Millard, Richard Starr, Jeff Winters, Mary Patrick, Troy Waterman, Brenda Cowling, John Milewski

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

MOTION CARRIED

VII. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

(VII.1.) Introduction and First Reading - Ordinance 603 - DDA Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan

City Manager Garland introduced Ordinance 603 to establish a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan, as recommended for approval by the DDA Board of Directors at its February 18, 2026, meeting. She explained that the Plan would create a new development area within the existing DDA District that focuses on the key commercial corridors near Main Street and along M-66.

Councilmember Millard made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Winters, to introduce and conduct a first reading of Ordinance No. 603, an ordinance to approve and adopt the Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan for the City of Ionia Downtown Development Authority. The motion was also to schedule a Public Hearing regarding the proposed ordinance for 6:30 PM, Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at Ionia City Hall and authorize notification to the public and the affected taxing jurisdictions in accordance with PA 57 of 2018, as amended.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Margot Cook, Tom Millard, Richard Starr, Jeff Winters, Mary Patrick, Troy Waterman, Brenda Cowling, John Milewski

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

MOTION CARRIED

**CITY OF IONIA
IONIA COUNTY, MICHIGAN
Ordinance No. 603**

AN ORDINANCE TO REPEAL PART EIGHT, TITLE FOUR, CHAPTER 884 ENTITLED “DEVELOPMENT AND TAX INCREMENT FINANCING PLAN FOR THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY” AND ENACT A NEW CHAPTER 885 ENTITLED “DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY DEVELOPMENT AND TAX INCREMENT FINANCING PLAN” OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF IONIA TO APPROVE AND ADOPT THE DEVELOPMENT AND TAX INCREMENT FINANCING PLAN FOR THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF IONIA

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY OF IONIA (the “City”) HEREBY ORDAINS:

Section 1. Repeal Part Eight, Title Four, Chapter 884. Part Eight, Title Four, Chapter 884 entitled “Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan for the Downtown Development Authority,” Sections 884.01 through 884.14, inclusive, of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Ionia is hereby repealed in its entirety.

Section 2. Enactment of Chapter 885. Part Eight, Title Four of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Ionia is hereby amended to enact a new Chapter 885, entitled “Downtown Development Authority Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan” to read in its entirety as follows:

Chapter 885
Downtown Development Authority Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan

885.01 Intent

885.02 Public Purpose

885.03	<u>Findings</u>
885.04	<u>Approval and Adoption</u>
885.05	<u>Duration of the Plan</u>
885.06	<u>Amendments</u>
885.07	<u>Annual Report</u>
885.08	<u>Conflicts of Laws; Severability</u>

885.01 INTENT.

This Chapter is intended to implement the powers granted under the Recodified Tax Increment Financing Act, Public Act 57 of 2018, as amended, (the “Act”) by approving a Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan (the “Plan”) designed to foster economic revitalization, strengthen the downtown commercial core, improve public infrastructure, and enhance property values within the designated Development Area of the Downtown Development Authority District. The Plan authorizes the use of tax increment revenues to support public improvements and development activities that serve a public purpose and benefit the City and its residents.

885.02 PUBLIC PURPOSE.

The Ionia City Council determined that the Plan constitutes a public purpose and that it is in the best interests of the public to proceed with the Plan in order to halt property value deterioration in the Downtown District, to increase property tax valuation, to eliminate the causes of the deterioration in property values, and to promote growth in the Downtown District.

885.03 FINDINGS.

The City Council’s determination on the Plan, was based on the following considerations:

- (a) Despite its best efforts, the established Development Area Citizens Council was unable to provide recommendations to the Downtown Development Authority on the Plan due to a lack of interest by eligible residents within the Development Area.
- (b) The Plan meets the requirements set forth in Sections 217(2) of the Act.
- (c) The proposed method of financing future development is feasible and the City of Ionia Downtown Development Authority (the “Authority”) has the ability to arrange the financing.
- (d) The development is reasonable and necessary to carry out the purposes of the Act.
- (e) The land included within the Development Area to be acquired is reasonably necessary to carry out the purposes of the Act in an efficient and economically satisfactory manner.
- (f) The Development Plan portion of the Plan is in reasonable accord with the Master Plan for the City of Ionia.
- (g) Public services, such as fire and police protection and utilities, are or will be adequate to service the Development Area.
- (h) Changes in zoning, streets, street levels, intersections, and utilities, to the extent required by the Plan, are reasonably necessary for the project and for the City.

885.04 APPROVAL AND ADOPTION.

The Plan is hereby approved and adopted as of the date of this Ordinance. A copy of the Plan and all amendments thereto shall be maintained on file in the City Clerk's Office.

885.05 DURATION OF THE PLAN.

The Plan shall be effective for thirty (30) years from the effective date of this Ordinance.

885.06 AMENDMENTS.

The Plan may be amended by City Council in accordance with the Act and subject to all public notice requirements.

885.07 ANNUAL REPORT.

Annually, the Authority shall submit a report to City Council and other required entities, as required by the Act.

885.08 CONFLICTS OF LAWS; SEVERABILITY.

All ordinances, resolutions, and orders or parts thereof in conflict with the provisions of this chapter are to the extent of such conflict hereby repealed, and each section of this chapter and each subdivision of any section thereof is hereby declared to be independent, and the finding or holding of any section or subdivision thereof to be invalid or void shall not be deemed or held to affect the validity of any other section or subdivision of this chapter.

Section 3. Repealer. All ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict herewith are repealed to the extent of such conflict.

Section 4. Severability. Should any section, portion or part of this Ordinance be declared to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such declaration does not void or render inoperable any other part of this Ordinance.

Section 5. Publication and Effective Date. The City Clerk shall cause a notice of adoption of this Ordinance to be published. This Ordinance shall take effect immediately upon publication of a summary thereof as permitted by law, along with the date of its adoption, in the *Daily News*, a newspaper of general circulation in the City.

(VII.2.) Bid Award - Steele Park Project - Phase I

Mayor Milewski made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Starr, to approve the recommendation from MCSA Group to award the bid of \$1,359,900 to FCC Construction of Caledonia, MI for the Steele Park Project - Phase I with funds budgeted for this project in the FY25-26 and FY26-27 budgets in 239-545.800-801.000.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Margot Cook, Tom Millard, Richard Starr, Jeff Winters, Mary Patrick, Troy Waterman, Brenda Cowling, John Milewski

Nays: None
Abstentions: None

MOTION CARRIED

(VII.3.) Bid Award - Axon TASER 10 Project

City Manager Garland presented the TASER purchase request explaining that nearly 50% percent of the cost (\$40,945.50) will be reimbursed from MMRMA for a net cost to the City of \$44,445.50. She also indicated that funds were budgeted for this purchase in 101-345.000-989.000.

Councilmember Starr made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Winters, to approve the purchase of (15) TASER 10 units with necessary equipment for \$85,391, which includes five years of service from Axon Enterprise.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Margot Cook, Tom Millard, Richard Starr, Jeff Winters, Mary Patrick, Troy Waterman, Brenda Cowling, John Milewski

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

MOTION CARRIED

VIII. APPOINTMENTS

None.

IX. CITY DEPARTMENT REPORTS AND MINUTES FROM BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

(IX.1.) Accounts Payable

March 5 - Councilmember Millard and/or Councilmember Cowling

March 19 - Councilmember Starr and/or Councilmember Lee

(IX.2.) February Reports & Minutes

Written department reports and minutes from various City boards and commissions were provided to Council.

X. GOOD OF THE ORDER/ CITY COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS

City Clerk Bowman: Announced that the City is seeking election workers for the current election cycle.

City Manager Garland: (1) Notified Council that a special Council meeting will be needed on April 28 to act on the CWSRF and DWSRF applications; (2) Provided a reminder for the upcoming Firefighter Fundraiser and Chamber Bazaar on March 7; (3) Indicated that spring hydrant flushing will begin in March.

Tom Millard: (1) Thanked staff for the high water bill warning which he informed are typically sent out to residents with abnormal water usage; (2) Noted his excitement for the projects included in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Troy Waterman: (1) Mentioned that a resident contacted him about donating a tree for the City's 2026 Christmas tree; (2) Thanked the department heads for their work putting together projects in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Brenda Cowling: (1) Gave a reminder of the upcoming free movie screening of "Jaws" on March

16.

Mayor John Milewski: (1) Echoed the reminder for Free Movie Monday on March 16; (2) Indicated that there was a great turnout for the free Presidents' Day Movie; (3) Thanked everyone who attended the State of the City Address as there were approximately 50 people in attendance; (4) Thanked the City's department heads.

XI. CLOSED SESSION

(XI.1.) Closed session in accordance with MCL 15.268, Sec. 8 (1)(h) To consider material exempt from discussion or disclosure by state or federal statute (simple majority vote required)

Councilmember Cowling made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Starr, to enter into closed session at 7:31 PM to consider material exempt from discussion or disclosure by state or federal statute in accordance with MCL 15.268, Sec. 8(1)(h).

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Councilmember Cowling made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Patrick, to return to open session at 8:33 PM.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Cowling made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Winters, to adjourn.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jonathan T. Bowman
Ionia City Clerk